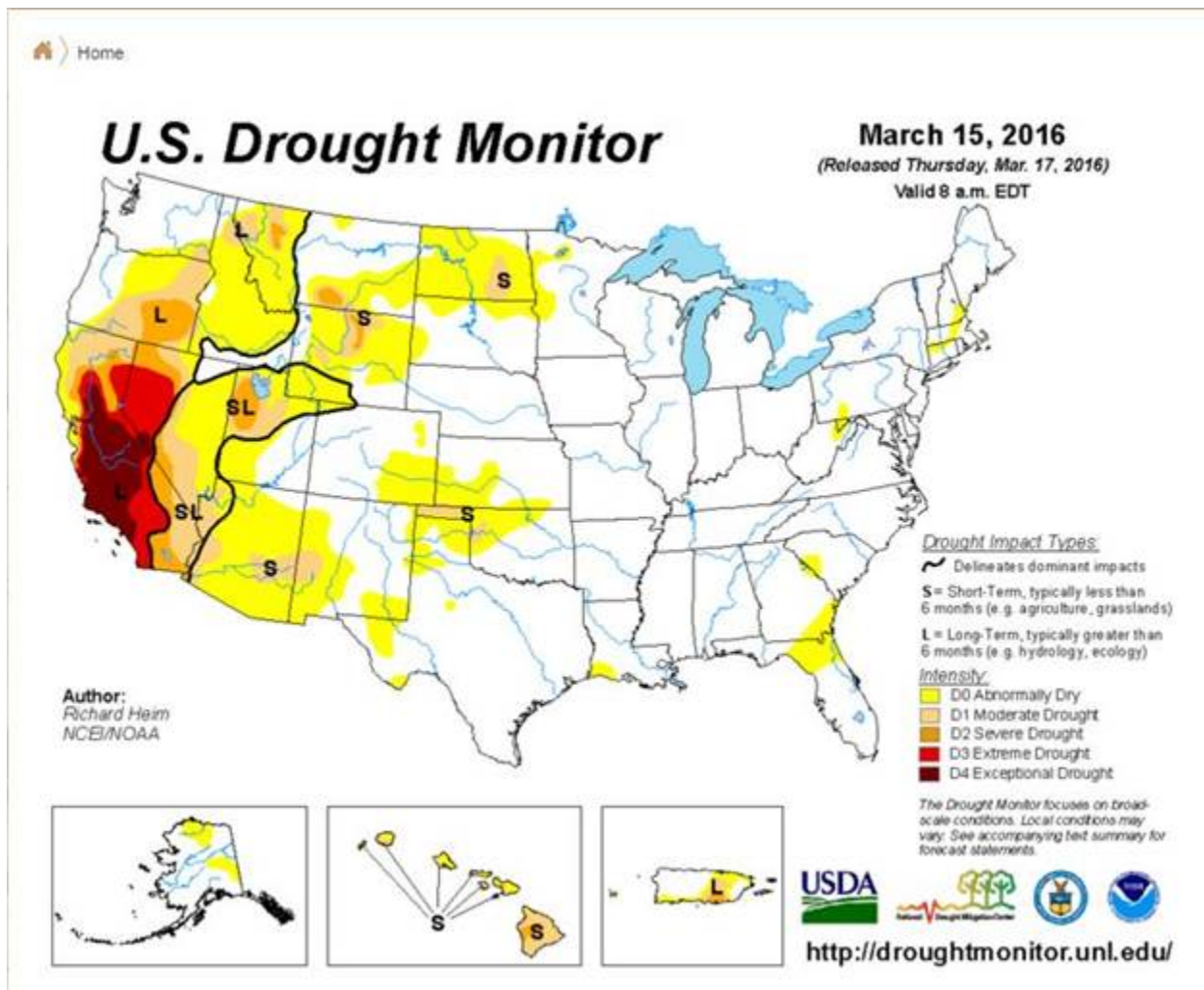


# Nebraska Department of Agriculture Ag Update – March 17, 2016



## Southern and Central Plains Summary

(Drought Monitor) The upper-level low pressure system funneled saturating rains into the eastern sections of the Southern Plains, but the rains mostly missed the western sections. As noted earlier, extreme eastern Texas received over 10 inches of rain this week, with 2+ inches stretching from southeastern Oklahoma to the lower and mid Rio Grande Valley. D0 and D1 in eastern, central, and southern Texas were eliminated. But rainfall amounts dropped off the further west you went in the region, with virtually no rain measured in the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles into southeast Colorado and southwest Kansas and across most of Nebraska. D0 expanded from the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles into these parts of Colorado and Kansas and also adjacent parts

of New Mexico, and D1 was added to the Oklahoma panhandle. USDA NASS reports from March 13 had 45% of the topsoil and 37% of the subsoil in Kansas short or very short of moisture, statewide, with conditions worse in the southwest to central sections, and USGS streamflow was quite low in central Kansas. This was early in the growing season, so only 7% of the winter wheat crop was rated in poor to very poor condition. Even though an inch or more of rain fell locally in western Oklahoma, the D0-D1 was left unchanged there to reflect continued low lake levels. In southeast Colorado, hot temperatures & strong winds were drying out soils and sending crops downhill fast, and numerous range fires were also occurring.

For more on this story, please visit: <http://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

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## **GMO labeling bill stalls in Senate**

(Agri-Pulse) A bill that would preempt state GMO labeling laws was blocked in the Senate as key Democrats demanded more concessions from the food industry on proposed new disclosure requirements for biotech ingredients.

"This is a pretty simple vote. You're either for agriculture or you're not," Senate Agriculture Chairman Pat Roberts, R-Kan., said before the cloture vote today.

The appeal fell flat. Roberts didn't reach an agreement before the vote with his committee's top Democrat, Debbie Stabenow, on the disclosure provisions, and he was unable to get the 60 votes necessary to advance the bill. The cloture motion failed, 48-49. Both Nebraska Senators voted for cloture.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell switched his vote to "no" on the cloture motion, which will allow him to bring up the legislation at any time should Roberts strike a deal.

For more on this story, please visit: <http://www.agri-pulse.com/>

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## **Property Tax Proposal Gains Traction in Committee**

(KRVN) After weeks of debate, a new property tax proposal aimed at farm and ranch landowners is gaining support in a Nebraska legislative committee.

Members of the Revenue Committee voted unanimously Wednesday in favor of a proposal that would boost the amount of state revenue that would go into an agricultural property tax credit.

Farm and ranch landowners would receive a larger credit if the measure is passed, offsetting some of their local property taxes. The legislation would also impose new budget restrictions on community colleges, which rely partially on property taxes.

The committee will hold a public hearing on the proposal at 2 p.m. on March 24th.

For more on this story, please visit: <http://krvn.com/agricultural/property-tax-proposal-gains-traction-in-committee/>

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## UNL climatologist foresees wet pattern developing

(Brownfield Ag Network) The recent warm and dry conditions in the western Corn Belt have allowed farmers to get an early start on spring fieldwork. But University of Nebraska-Lincoln climatologist Al Dutcher predicts a more active weather pattern over the next few weeks.

“Right now, I firmly believe that—based on past El Nino events—we tend to see some semblance of benign weather during the heart of the winter, but as we move into the spring we start to return to the type of patterns that were consistent during the fall period, as we see the jet stream moving back into our region. And if we look at the last fall period, it was aggressively wet here in the western Corn Belt. So that’s what I’m kind of pushing toward as we go through the spring period,” Dutcher says.

That means conditions could be similar to last spring, Dutcher says—but with one big exception. “We definitely have more subsoil moisture accumulated at this time across Nebraska than a comparable period last year,” he says. “It’s just a matter of how the precipitation events unfold—and when does the precipitation shut off.”

Dutcher expects the switchover from El Nino to La Nina to happen over the second half of the growing season. If that happens, he says, conditions would be very similar to last year—wet and cool before the Fourth of July, warm and dry after.

For more on this story, please visit: <http://brownfieldagnews.com/2016/03/14/unl-climatologist-foresees-wet-pattern-developing/>

# **As low commodities, volatile cattle markets hurt farmers, ‘ample funds’ remain for continued farm bank lending**

(Omaha World Herald) If crop producers reap a bountiful harvest in 2016, their earnings this year will be as low as they’ve been since 2002, according to the latest U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates. Meanwhile, the banks that increased farm loans by 8 percent in 2015 have “ample funds” to continue shelling out credit in 2016.

That’s according to a Tuesday report from the American Bankers Association.

Total loans at such banks last year grew to \$100.3 billion from \$94.6 billion in 2014.

Banks accounted for about 50 percent of all farm loans in the U.S. at the end of 2015, with most of the remainder coming from lenders within the federal Farm Credit System.

Despite tough times for some borrowers, the American Bankers Association isn’t sounding the alarm. Virtually all of the 1,976 farm banks turned a profit last year, indicating relative strength in the financial positions of borrowers.

For more on this story, please visit: [http://www.omaha.com/money/as-low-commodities-volatile-cattle-markets-hurt-farmers-ample-funds/article\\_251c2fac-a7a0-5664-87a4-4e6648da6cdd.html](http://www.omaha.com/money/as-low-commodities-volatile-cattle-markets-hurt-farmers-ample-funds/article_251c2fac-a7a0-5664-87a4-4e6648da6cdd.html)

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## **2,700-panel, six-acre solar array makes it the largest in Nebraska**

(Kearney Hub) With the flip of a switch Monday, the state’s largest solar array became operational. A few weeks ago, rancher Jim Jenkins had a ribbon cutting for a 25-kilowatt solar system on his ranch near Callaway. Monday, Pandorf Land & Cattle welcomed many of the same visitors to another solar ribbon cutting near Callaway — this time for a 600 kw system. The new solar array has 2,700 panels mounted in 12 rows and occupies six acres. The cost of the project was \$1.65 million, and Pandorf said they hope to recoup their investment in seven-10 years.

Pandorf Brothers LLC contracted with Custer Public Power District to purchase all power generated from the solar farm. In return, CPPD helped with some of the panels and selected the site because it’s close to a three-phase power line, which will transport

the solar power to the grid. At its peak the solar farm will generate enough electricity to power about 60 homes.

While the Pandorf project is the largest system in the state, plans for others are under way. The Custer County Board of Supervisors recently approved a permit for a solar farm near Merna that is expected to be larger than the Pandorf array.

For more on this story, please visit: [http://www.kearneyhub.com/news/local/panel-six-acre-solar-array-makes-it-the-largest-in/article\\_664049be-eaca-11e5-9a31-dfe1f7964d88.html](http://www.kearneyhub.com/news/local/panel-six-acre-solar-array-makes-it-the-largest-in/article_664049be-eaca-11e5-9a31-dfe1f7964d88.html)

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## **Governor Ricketts Announces 2016 Winners of National Ag Week in Nebraska Poster Contest**

(Office of the Governor) Today, in celebration of National Ag Week, Governor Pete Ricketts announced the winners of this year's Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) poster contest. The contest was open to first through sixth grade students in Nebraska.

"Agriculture is the heart and soul of this state," said Governor Pete Ricketts. "The students who participated in the competition know and understand this. Their posters were created using this year's contest theme, 'Agriculture: Growing Nebraska,' and creatively highlight our state's number one industry."

"These students are learning about the important role agriculture has in developing our food supply and how ag impacts our daily lives," said NDA Director Greg Ibach. "Teaching consumers about where their food comes from starts with quality conversations at an early age."

The posters were judged in three separate categories, and the NDA received nearly 1,500 entries in total.

For more on this story, please visit: <http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/kids/poster/2016/2016contest.html>

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# ‘Science Saturdays’ Offer Extra Lessons at Raising Nebraska

(NTV) A little measuring, some careful observation, and a couple hours on a Saturday morning add up to a lot of learning.

“It’s a hands-on, interactive that allows families, for free, to come into Raising Nebraska, explore the exhibits, but then to have an additional educational program as a part of it,” Beth Janning, coordinator at Raising Nebraska, explains of their Science Saturdays.

Held the second Saturday of the month, the special program at the ag-education exhibit hall lets kids explore things like soil, static electricity, and sells. This month it was all about beans, or more specifically pulses, which are the edible seeds of plants in the legume family.

Janning says it’s the International Year of the Pulse, so groups like the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission are promoting the products being grown here, especially in the panhandle area.

“The state of Nebraska is ranked number one in growing Great Northern beans, and number two in growing pinto beans, and so it’s something to be very proud of for Nebraska,” says Janning.

For more on this story, please visit: <http://www.nebraska.tv/story/31456071/science-saturdays-offer-extra-lessons-at-raising-nebraska>

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Nebraska Department of Agriculture  
PO Box 94947  
Lincoln, NE 68509  
<http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/>